

## The Council of Nicaea

221

not even explicitly stated who presided. The presidency of the Emperor was one only of honour; the actual presidents were probably the legates of Pope Sylvester, viz., Hosius of Cordova and the two presbyters, Vito and Vincentius. But into the controversy which rages round this point we need not enter.

The general feeling of the Council was not long in clearing itself. Arius, who was regarded as a defendant on his trial, made his position absolutely clear. He did not envelop himself, as he might have done, in a cloud of metaphysics from which it could have been difficult to gather his precise meaning. On the contrary, he seems to have come prepared with a résumé of his doctrines, and to have been ready to defend his outposts as resolutely as a citadel. Immediately, therefore, the Council became split up into contending parties. There were the out-and-out Arians, few but formidable, and the in-and-out Trinitarians, led with great ability by the young Athanasius, whose reputation steadily rose as the days passed by. There was also a middle party, led by Eusebius of Nicomedia and supported by Eusebius of Caesarea, whose intellectual and personal sympathies lay with Arius rather than with Athanasius, though they saw that the great majority of the Council were against them, and that Arius and his opinions were sure of excommunication. Theirs was what we may call the "cross-bench band." They doubtless felt, what many who approach this controversy at the present day feel, that once appeal is made to Reason, there must be no